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POLITICAL PARTIES OF NATIONAL MINORITIES OF THE FIRST CZECHOSLOVAK REPUBLIC (1918-1938)

Abstract.

The article is devoted to political parties of national minorities in the First Czechoslovak Republic. The national question had its own peculiarities in the programs of each of the political parties of national minorities. The most difficult, of course, were the issues of the former ruling nations - German and Hungarian. It is worth noting that although in some periods of the history of the First Czechoslovak German and Hungarian political parties proclaimed in their programs loyalty to the state and the desire to cooperate, in fact, they saw activism as a way to gain power and achieve their own political goals.

Keywords: *national minorities, Czechoslovakia, political parties, Germans, Poles, Hungarians, Jews*

Among the many factors that led to the revolutionary events in Europe in the early twentieth century, a prominent place belongs to the national. In this context, the experience of multinational states that underwent revolutionary transformations after the First World War is of considerable interest. Such polyethnic states included the First Czechoslovak Republic (Czechoslovakia). The emergence of an independent Czechoslovak state in 1918 was an important step in the historical development of the Czech and Slovak peoples. The titular nation was proclaimed the "Czechoslovak nation", which accounted for 65% of the country's population. Other nationalities have acquired the status of national minorities with guaranteed democratic rights and freedoms. Despite this, national relations in Czechoslovakia were not cloudless. Most members of national minorities did not agree with their new state and legal status.

The aim of the article is to study the activities of political parties of national minorities in Czechoslovakia: German, Polish, Hungarian, Jewish.

The activities of the parties of the largest German minority were studied by Bruegel J. [1], Karnik Z. [2], Beran L. [3], and Shebek J. [4]. The activities of parties of smaller minorities in interwar Czechoslovakia were studied by V. Goužvička [5], J. Gonaiser [6], P. Marek [8], R. Petras [9], and V. Zemko [10].

According to the 1921 census, Germans accounted for 22.94% of the population of the First Czechoslovakia, which made the German question the most important in interwar Czechoslovakia. The history of the German question in the Czechoslovak Republic is largely a history of the Czech-German controversy, which began long before the formation of this state. From the end of the XIX century, Czech-German conflicts became one of the main components of the national conflict in Austria-Hungary. Their essence was the desire of the Czech and German people to exercise the right to self-determination. The realization of the right to self-determination for the Czech people consisted in the formation of an

independent state which was to include territories with a German population. As Z. Karnik noted in this regard: "The main tragedy in the exercise of the right to self-determination for the Czech and German peoples was that the exercise of the right to self-determination by one of the peoples automatically contradicted the right to self-determination of another" [2, p.38].

The inclusion of the Sudetenland in the Czechoslovak Republic marked the beginning of another aggravation of Czech-German relations within the new state. It is worth analyzing the causes of this conflict.

Undoubtedly, the main reason for the negative attitude of the German population to the Czechoslovak Republic is the loss of their privileged position, which they held in Austria-Hungary. The authorities of the new state proclaimed the basis of state policy to be dominated by democratic principles, according to which the organization of state power and the solution of important social issues should be carried out according to the will of the majority of the population. The Germans in Austria-Hungary, although they did not have a majority, held a privileged position.

As a result, the Germans formed a negative attitude towards democracy as a form of social order in general. As the Sudeten German politician W. Jaksch noted in this regard: "Every step towards democratization reduced the influence of the Germans in the empire" [1, p.45].

The Germans perceived the process of democratization of society differently than the Czechs. For the Germans it is a reduction of their economic and social influence, for the Czechs it is the achievement of national freedom and state independence. Criticism of the Czechoslovak state system has long been the basis of the political line of German parties. It was reduced to the following main points:

1). Most Sudeten Germans believed that their political rights were not fully respected. Sudeten German politicians have repeatedly stated that "Sudeten Ger-

mans are deprived of all rights in the state of "humanism and democracy", which was proclaimed by the Czechs, and which is only for them" [3, p.34].

2). The Sudeten Germans did not agree with the status of a national minority in Czechoslovakia. At the same time, they claimed that the Czechs themselves, who without Slovaks accounted for 49% and were a national minority in their country [4, p.861].

3). The decision on the fate of the Sudeten Germans was made without their participation by the Czech Revolutionary People's Assembly, and the peace treaties that enshrined this decision "cut the whole organism of the German nation" [5, p.41]

4). German politicians criticized the proportional electoral system, which, in their opinion, did not ensure proper representation of the German population in government [4, p.862].

Undoubtedly, the main political issue facing German political forces in Czechoslovakia was the national question. The national question in the programs of German political parties in the First Czechoslovak Republic underwent certain evolutionary changes, in accordance with the political processes that took place in Czech-German relations. According to them, there are four stages in the evolution of the national question in the political programs of the Sudeten Germans.

The first, initial, stage lasted from 1918 to September 1919. This was the period of formation of German political parties in Czechoslovakia and the creation of the first political programs. At this stage, political parties focused on the struggle for self-determination, which became the main slogan of all Sudeten German political parties. After the former peoples of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy embarked on the path of building their own statehood, the idea of unification with Germany became popular among the Sudeten Germans.

The second stage - the period of Sudeten German negativism, which lasted from late 1919 to 1925.

The process of formation of German political parties in the Czechoslovak Republic created the basis for the political representation of the German national community in the state. In this regard, the Czech researcher L. Beran noted: "Sudeten Germans experienced a reflection on the political system of old Austria, but political events required a democratic understanding of the political system and the existing party system. Therefore, a nationwide body of Sudeten Germans was needed, but the existing political parties, as usual, protected their own interests, thus working against their national community" [3, p.105].

In 1922 began a new government led by A. Schwegli (1922-1925). Schwegli's election as prime minister was endorsed by German activist politicians. In May 1924, negotiations took place between the Prime Minister and German politicians B. Kafka, R. Mair-Harting, F. Krzepak and F. Spina. The talks demonstrated the readiness of a large number of German politicians to cooperate with the Czechoslovak Republic [6, p.218].

Since then, the national question in German political programs has undergone some changes related to

the policy of Sudeten German activism. This new stage lasted from 1925 to 1933.

In 1928, the Smikh Congress of German political parties took place. The Smikhiv Congress limited itself to stating and recognizing the existing national problems and the unity of the multinational Social-Democracy of Czechoslovakia in its quest to solve them. However, it was the beginning of rapprochement between the socialist parties in Czechoslovakia. As a result of the Smikhiv Congress, a joint committee was formed, the task of which was to generalize the ideological positions of individual socialist parties of the country in order to create a general program statement [3, p.215].

Thus, after 1927, a new stage in the history of the NSDWP(Cz) began, the main content of which was a turn from confrontation to cooperation with the Czechoslovak Social Democrats and participation in the coalition government. Despite numerous difficulties, defeats and failures, the party retained its role as the largest political organization that represented the interests of the German population in Czechoslovakia. It is worth noting that the party almost lost its leading position among German voters, as it failed to achieve significant changes in the situation of the German minority in Czechoslovakia.

During this period, the criticism of activist policy by the right-wing Sudeten German parties - National Socialists and Nationalists - intensified. These parties gained considerable popularity in the early 1930s, advocating the cessation of activist policies, which were described as "cooperation with the ruling parties against the interests of the German minority" [7, p.115].

Citizens of the Czechoslovak Republic who belonged to the Hungarian nationality lived mainly in Slovakia and Subcarpathian Russia. According to the 1921 census, 744,622 Hungarians lived in the Czechoslovak Republic, and thus they were a fairly large national minority.

Like the Germans, the Hungarians held a privileged position in the Austro-Hungarian monarchy before the creation of the Czechoslovak Republic. Therefore, it is not surprising that the Hungarian population negatively perceived their new status as a national minority and did not seek cooperation with the Czechoslovak authorities. Hungarian politicians saw the way out of the situation in support of the idea of "Greater Hungary", ie the restoration of the unity of the Hungarian state in the former borders [9, p.925].

The signing of the Treaty of Trianon on June 4, 1920, finally buried this idea. It was replaced by the idea of revising the Versailles system of peace treaties, the first step to which, according to Hungarian politicians, was the expansion of the rights of the Hungarian minority in the state. It is an indisputable fact that the influence of the majority of Hungarian parties in the Czechoslovak Republic of Budapest, which used them to return to the power of Hungary its former territories [9, p.925].

The party-political system of the Hungarian minority was finally formed after the emergence of the republic. Hungarian political parties expressed their position on the new state at the first session of the parliament elected in 1920. On behalf of the Hungarian

population, they protested against the incorporation of the former Hungarian lands into the Czechoslovak Republic. This position became the basis of the national question in the political programs of Hungarian parties throughout the interwar period [10, p.113].

The largest Hungarian party in Czechoslovakia was the Zemsky Socialist Christian Party (ZSCP). It officially took place on November 23, 1919 in the city of Koshice. Lawyer J. Leyele was elected chairman of the party [11, p.231].

The party's program was officially approved at a congress in Bratislava in 1920. According to the authors of the program, the solution of the national question is possible only under the condition of granting autonomy to Slovakia and establishing linguistic equality of citizens.

It should be noted that the national question has always played a leading role in the party's program, as the party built its political line on all other issues of socio-political and economic nature. In the early 1920s, the Budapest-led party actively promoted the idea of revising the Versailles system, particularly on the southern borders with Slovakia and Hungary.

From the second half of the 20's, focused on the protection of the rights of the Hungarian minority in Czechoslovakia [9, p.926].

The demands of autonomy in the party program were combined with a negative attitude towards the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and the rejection of any cooperation with the government of this state. It was this position that became the basis for the formation in 1921 of a bloc of opposition parties together with the Hungarian National Party and the Spish German Party. It should be noted that for this association, autonomy was not a goal, but a means of eliminating Czechoslovakia [11, p.233].

Nevertheless, there was a small group of supporters of activist policy in the party, led by the party leader J. Leyele, who left the party on the eve of the 1925 elections.

The idea of cooperating with the Slovak GSLP was much more popular among the party, as both parties were united by the idea of autonomy. However, at this stage of its development, the GSLP demanded autonomy within the Czechoslovak state, which was inconsistent with the sharply negativist position of the ZSHP. In addition, negotiations between the two political forces were complicated by interethnic conflicts between Hungarians and Slovaks, as well as sharp statements by the leadership of the ZSHP, in which Hungarians argued that Slovaks could not achieve autonomy without their support [11, p.235].

In the run-up to the election, a new program was adopted due to the crisis in the party due to the withdrawal of J. Leyele's group.

The program was based on the idea of Slovak autonomy, which was proclaimed the main goal of the party. ZSHP demanded the granting of the right to self-determination in the economic and cultural sphere for all peoples of the Czechoslovak Republic, the creation of its own, Hungarian, Zemstvo and school councils [11, p.927].

In the elections of 1925, the party won 98,000 votes (1.4%). From the second half of the 1920s, Hungarian nationalism intensified in the party, which contributed to the party's further rapprochement with the Hungarian National Party. In the following elections of 1929 and 1935, the party participated in a coalition with the UNP and the Spysz German Party [11, p.254].

In the first half of the 1930's, there was a struggle within the party between two currents, supporters of irredentism and young party members who had already been educated in the new Czechoslovak state and believed that it was necessary to establish cooperation with the government. This crisis in the party, as well as the desire to create a common platform for representing the interests of the Hungarian minority, prompted it to unite with the UNP, which was officially formalized on June 23, 1936, resulting in the formation of the United Hungarian Party [11, p.233].

The Hungarian National Party, which formed an alliance with the ZSHP, was the second most popular Hungarian party. It was formed on January 17, 1920 in the city of Komarno under the name of the Hungarian Zemstvo Party of Farmers and Landowners. In 1925, after joining several small party formations, the party was renamed the Hungarian National Party. The party's program was divided into national and economic parts. In the national part, the party first of all sharply criticized the Czechoslovak authorities and pointed to discrimination against the Hungarian population. The main national demand of the party was the exercise of the right to self-determination by granting autonomy to Slovakia and Subcarpathian Russia [13, p.203].

In terms of autonomy, the party was quite moderate, due to the influence of the opposition parties of Slovakia and Subcarpathian Russia. The program proclaimed the idea of self-government in the economic sphere (own economic chamber, financial institutions) and cultural (autonomy of school education), which would improve the position of Hungarians within the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic [13, p.204].

It should be noted that until almost the end of the 1920s, the party did not rule out the possibility of cooperation with the government, which, according to its leaders, could rebuild the Czechoslovak Republic on the Swiss model, which would ensure maximum development of the Hungarian people. Since the 30's, under the influence of Budapest, the party changed its political line towards sharp criticism of the Czechoslovak government and irredentism [11, p.939].

Like the ZSHP, the UNP sought to cooperate with other political parties in order to represent the interests of the Hungarian people in the state. Eventually, as noted above, in 1936, together with the Christian Socialists, it formed the United Hungarian Party (UUP) [14, p.235].

Determining the nature of this new political entity, it should first be noted that the party was completely under the control of the Hungarian revisionists. The PMO program was adopted in 1936. It was based on a compromise between the political programs of the ZSHP and UNP [13, p.221].

The main national demand of the party was the proclamation of the autonomy of Slovakia and Subcarpathian Russia and the achievement of Hungarian national self-government within its framework. Self-government had to be enshrined in law. Any attempt to violate it or denationalize the Hungarian population was severely punished. Important steps to achieve self-government were to be economic self-government and self-government of school education [13, p.222].

Although the program proclaimed allegiance to the ideals of democracy, the party's activities, led from abroad, were aimed at destroying the Czechoslovak state. The party adhered to this political line until its dissolution on November 28, 1938. Later, part of the party became part of the Budapest Parliament, where it formed a separate faction [13, p.938].

In addition to the two leading parties in the Czechoslovak Republic, there were several dozen less popular parties. The Hungarian Social Democrats and Communists were not very popular among the Hungarian population of the republic.

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In addition to the two leading parties in the Czechoslovak Republic, there were several dozen less popular parties. The Hungarian Social Democrats and Communists were not very popular among the Hungarian population of the republic.

Thus, the vast majority of Hungarian political parties considered it possible to resolve the Hungarian national question by gaining autonomy. For almost the entire period of the First Czechoslovak Republic, Hungarian parties were in a negativist position, and autonomy for them was only a means of destroying the state and returning to Hungarian rule.

One of the few national minorities in the Czechoslovak Republic was the Polish minority. According to the 1921 census, there were 17,835,000 (0.56%) Poles in the country. The vast majority of the Polish minority considered the decision to transfer part of Teszyn Silesia to Czechoslovakia unfair. Therefore, any cooperation with the Czechoslovak government was considered by Polish political parties as a temporary phenomenon aimed at protecting the rights of the Polish population, until the moment when it becomes possible to unite with the Second Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth [16, p.84].

The Polish national question in Czechoslovakia was complicated by the unresolved Polish-Czechoslovak border. Apparently, this is why Warsaw did not ratify the agreement signed on November 29, 1920 with the Czechoslovak Republic, which concerned the protection of national minorities. Warsaw carried out propaganda campaigns against the Czechoslovak Republic, supported Hungarian anti-Czechoslovak revisionism, and sought to prove to world public opinion the desire of the local population to unite with the Second Polish-

Lithuanian Commonwealth. This led to political instability in Teszyn Silesia and the restriction by the Czechoslovak government of some of the constitutional rights of Polish citizens of Czechoslovakia. That is why the elections to the Czechoslovak parliament were postponed in Teszyn Silesia.

It should be noted that the example of the Polish minority clearly illustrates the dependence of the national question in Czechoslovakia on foreign policy factors. On April 23, 1925, E. Benes and A. Skszynski signed three agreements in Warsaw aimed at overcoming the Polish-Czechoslovak disputes. These were liquidation agreements, arbitration and trade agreements. The most important provisions of the liquidation agreement concerned the provision of full equality of the Polish minority in the Czechoslovak Republic and the Czech minority in Poland [4 p.125].

Since then, all Polish political parties have embarked on an activist political course, which they followed until 1933. Evidence of increased cooperation between Polish and Czech politicians was the fact that after the election a delegate from the Union of Silesian Catholics L. Wolf joined the parliamentary club of Czechoslovak farmers. Polish politicians J. Buzek and E. Hobot joined the parliamentary club of Czechoslovak Social Democrats. During this period, even the most radical Polish political force, the Polish Communists, took part in cooperation with the government [18, p.244].

The activist course of Polish parties declined with the onset of the economic crisis. Finally, the Polish parties refused to cooperate with the Czechoslovak government after the signing of a non-aggression treaty between Germany and Poland on January 26, 1934. Since then, Poland has taken an anti-Czechoslovak position in international politics, in which the Teszyn issue has played a leading role.

Four parties had the most support among the Polish minority: the HRC, the Union of Silesian Catholics (SCK) led by lawyer L. Wolf, the Polish People's Party (PPP), led by J. Berger and J. Buzek, and the Polish Socialist Party (PSP), headed by E. Hobot.

In the 1920s, the most popular among the Polish population of the republic was the International Human Rights Committee, which sharply criticized both the Prague authorities and Warsaw politicians. This popularity was due both to the international political tradition of the labor movement in the region and to the active propaganda work of local communists led by K. Slyvka. The party based its political conception on the Polish question on the need for political transformation in both states. The vast majority of its voters were the proletarian population of the region.

One of the most popular Polish parties of the Polish minority was the Union of Silesian Catholics in Czechoslovakia (SCK(Cz)). The party was founded on September 30, 1920. In its political program, the party demanded the granting of autonomy to Teszyn Silesia, protested against the closure of Polish schools and the transfer of Polish churches under the jurisdiction of the Czechoslovak Church. The main goal of the party was proclaimed - protection of national and religious interests of Polish Catholics [19, p.945].

In 1925, the SCK(Cz) formed a pre-election union with the Polish National Workers' Union. As a result of the election, L. Wolf received a deputy mandate.

In the run-up to the 1928 local elections, the SCK (H) party formed a coalition with the Jewish Party, but as the union failed to win a single seat, the coalition quickly disintegrated.

Despite active protests against the national policy of the state and discrimination against the Polish population, which were repeatedly voiced by L. Wolf from the parliamentary rostrum, until 1933 the party continued to pursue an activist course. In 1937, the SCK(Cz) together with the rest of the Polish political parties joined a joint coalition [2, p.246].

The program of the Polish People's Party (PPP) was more liberal on the national question. The party was founded in December 1922. It was headed by J. Buzek and J. Berger. In its program, the party advocated peaceful coexistence and cooperation of all nationalities in the country, as well as religious tolerance. The PPP program, like other Polish parties, required autonomy for the Polish minority [2, p.247].

On September 10, 1937, the PPP merged with the Polish Social Democratic Party. After the unification of the PPP, it ceased to exist as an independent political party [11, p.231].

The Social Democrats were quite popular among the Polish population of the republic. The final unification of Polish social democratic organizations into a single political party in the Czechoslovak Republic took place in January 1921 in Ostrava. The party was renamed the Polish Socialist Workers' Party in Czechoslovakia (PSWP (Cz)). A few months later, the party split. The party's left, led by party leader E. Hobot, applied for membership in the HRC, which was approved. It should be noted that E. Hobot returned to the Socialist Party a few years later and became its leader again [2, p.220].

After the split, the party changed its name to the Polish Socialist Party (PSP). Unlike the vast majority of Polish political parties, the Socialists did not demand autonomy for Teszyn Silesia in their political program, but focused on criticizing Prague's national policy and the need to introduce a socialist system. Polish socialists called for cooperation with the Czechoslovak Social Democrats and promoted activism as an alternative to nationalism, for which the party was repeatedly sharply criticized by Polish nationalist organizations [10, p.346].

Since December 1934, under the influence of pressure from abroad, criticism of the PSP by non-socialist Polish parties has intensified. As a result, some of the party members separated from the Socialists and formed a new party called the Polish Social Democratic Party in Czechoslovakia (PSDP (Cz)). In September 1937, as noted above, this party merged with the PNP [10, p.253].

After the 1935 elections, in which the party did not win a single parliamentary seat, the PSP began active cooperation with the rest of the Polish non-socialist parties and became one of the initiators of a joint coalition of all Polish parties.

Polish parties in the Czechoslovak Republic often formed pre-election alliances with each other and formed various coordination committees to enter parliament. Thus, in September 1923, the National Bloc was created as part of the Union of Silesian Catholics, the Polish People's Party and the Polish section of the Silesian People's Party. In the parliamentary elections of 1925, this union participated under the name of the Polish National Workers' Union. However, all these attempts to consolidate Polish political forces were ineffective. The Polish minority was virtually unrepresented in parliament. [2, p.255].

The Polish consulate in Moravia Ostrava actively interfered in the political activities of Polish parties. At the end of 1934, the Polish consulate started publishing the Polish Diary newspaper, which sharply criticized the national policy of the Czechoslovak Republic towards the Polish minority, and expressed the desire of the Poles to unite with the Second Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth [20, p.403].

It was on the initiative of the Polish consulate on March 28, 1938, in Český Těšín, a coalition was formed consisting of all the leading Polish parties called the Union of Poles in the Czechoslovak Republic. Its focal point was the Main Council of Poles in Czechoslovakia, established in September 1935 in Český Těšín under the leadership of Polish Consul A. Klotz. The agitation activity carried out by the new political formation indicated its pronounced anti-Czechoslovak character [20, p.405].

After Munich, Polish political parties merged into the political structures of the Second Commonwealth.

Thus, the Polish minority belonged to the small minorities of interwar Czechoslovakia and was hardly represented in the Czechoslovak parliament. The vast majority of the Polish population of the republic considered the decision of the Entente countries to join their region to the Czechoslovak Republic unfair. Therefore, most Polish political parties saw the solution to the Polish question in the granting of autonomy to Teszyn Silesia, which was later to facilitate the separation of the region from the Czechoslovak Republic and accession to the Second Commonwealth.

According to the 1921 census, the Jewish minority in Czechoslovakia numbered 350,000. At the same time, the Jewish population was unevenly distributed. In the Czech Republic, Moravia and Silesia, Jews accounted for 1.5% of the population, in Slovakia - 4.5%, and in Subcarpathian Russia about 15% [7, p.965].

The differences between the Jewish population were not only in the density of the population, much more important was the social, mental and ideological differentiation, which directly influenced the participation of Jews in the political life of Czechoslovakia. According to the Czech researcher M. Crgova, in terms of determining the nationality of the Jewish population in Czechoslovakia was divided into three groups: German Jews, Czechoslovak Jews and Zionists [7, p.966].

Unlike other national minorities in the Czechoslovak Republic, belonging to the Jewish minority was not determined primarily by language. Jewish self-identification had two options - national and religious, which

influenced the commitment of the Jewish population to certain political forces [4, p.68].

It is worth noting that the government of the republic and the Jewish political forces developed a fairly loyal relationship. Anti-Semitic sentiments were much less widespread in Czechoslovakia than in neighboring countries. In addition, the position of President TG greatly contributed to the establishment of relations with the authorities. Masaryk, who characterized Zionism as a "national liberation movement of great moral importance" [4, p.72].

The largest nationwide Jewish political party in the Czechoslovak Republic was the United Jewish Party. The roots of this party go back to the Zionist movement. At the beginning of their activities in the Czechoslovak Republic, the Zionists began to establish their own political organizations to represent the Jewish minority in the state. October 31, 1918 the Jewish National Council was established in Prague, representing "all nationally oriented Jews" in Czechoslovakia. The council was renamed the Czech Zionist Political Union. It was headed by L. Singer. The council was represented primarily by representatives of the Czech and Moravian Jewish national and Zionist unions, trade unions and the Zionist Socialist Party [3, p.980].

In November 1918. The Jewish National Council adopts a political program. First of all, it declared a favorable attitude towards the Czechoslovak state and stressed the need to unite the entire Jewish population on a national basis. Also, the main requirements of the program included: recognition of Jews as a separate nationality, granting the Jewish minority broad rights and cultural autonomy, equality of all citizens, democratization of society [5, p.72]. It is worth noting that the Czechoslovak government complied with the requirement to recognize Jews as a separate nationality.

In January 1919, the Jewish National Council convened a national congress of "national Jews in the Czechoslovak Republic." The main further task of the council was to create a single national organization on a national basis, which would represent Czechoslovak Jews [6, p.91].

In March 1919, the People's Union of Jews of Slovakia was established in Bratislava, which was essentially the Slovak representation of the Prague Jewish National Council. On the eve of the 1920 elections, these two organizations, as well as several other small Jewish political parties, formed the United Jewish Party (UJP) and adopted a common political program [4, p.78].

The UJP program focused exclusively on the rights and interests of the Jewish minority and emphasized the party's intention to pursue an independent political line. First of all, the program emphasized the desire of Jews to cooperate with the authorities in the further democratic development of the state. The following items of the program required the observance of equality of Jews in the socio-political and economic spheres, the free religion of Judaism and the state support of all cultural and charitable Jewish organizations.

In the following years, no significant changes took place in the party's program, focusing on the equality of

the Jewish population, its social and cultural development, as well as the maintenance and development of peace within the Czechoslovak state [3, p.981]. In the 1930s, the political activity of the UJP, like that of other Jewish parties, declined significantly, due to the rise of Nazi and anti-Semitic sentiment in the country. The left wing of the political camp was represented by the Jewish Zionist Party (ESP). It was formed in the early 1920s on the basis of numerous small Zionist organizations. The chairman of the party was A. Spiegel.

Like most Jewish parties, the ECJ was loyal to the Czechoslovak government and did not make radical political demands. It focused on improving the socio-economic situation and the free cultural development of the Jewish minority. In the 1930s, the ECJ was not active in politics, focusing on the internal problems of the Jewish minority. The party rejected a proposal by Hungarian political forces to co-operate, continuing to pursue a pro-government orientation. In 1935, the party decided not to run in the elections on its own, but nominated its candidate on the joint list of the CSDP. As a result, the ECJ for the first time won a seat in parliament, whose deputy was H. Kugel [4, p.158].

Quite popular among the Jewish population was the Jewish Democratic Party, which emerged in 1922 under the leadership of K. Weiss and G. Reisman. In 1925 it was renamed the Jewish Orthodox Party (JOP) [3, p.979].

The party's program testified to its orthodox-religious character. The main goal was proclaimed observance of the laws of Judaism in all spheres of life. The EOP expressed its support for the Czechoslovak Republic and its desire to cooperate with the government for the further development of the state. The party closely cooperated with Czechoslovak agrarians, due to which in the second half of the 1930s it began to grow in number [3, p.980].

The Jewish Civic Party (JCP), led by G. Gutman and K. Shalam, acted on the principles of conservative clericalism. In its program, the party advocated the economic and political consolidation of all Jews of the republic, proclaimed the need to create a single Jewish political party [4, p.128].

The JCP was not very active in the political life of the Jewish minority. She did not run in the parliamentary elections, although she supported pro-government parties, including the agrarian party. The party did not try to compete with other Jewish parties, but on the contrary focused on the consolidation of the Jewish minority [4, p.129].

In the late 1930's, there was a partial curtailment of Jewish parties, caused by growing anti-Semitic sentiment in the country. The participation of Jews in the country's political life decreased significantly, although they remained loyal to the Czechoslovak authorities. Increasingly, Jewish political parties, and the Jewish population in general, were criticized by Hungarian and German parties. That is why Jewish political parties tried to avoid participating in heated discussions on controversial issues in Czechoslovak politics.

Thus, the national question in the programs of Jewish political parties in the Czechoslovak Republic

was built on the principles of political tolerance and approval of the Czechoslovak Republic. Their political programs focused mainly on improving the socio-economic situation of the minority.

Undoubtedly, the national question in the state of nationalities, which was the interwar Czechoslovak Republic, was one of the most important political issues. Therefore, it is not surprising that in the programs of the parties of national minorities of the Czechoslovak Republic it is presented more extensively than in the programs of the Czech parties. The national question had its own peculiarities in the programs of each of the political parties of national minorities.

It is worth noting that although in some periods of the history of the First Czechoslovak German and Hungarian political parties proclaimed in their programs loyalty to the state and the desire to cooperate, in fact, they saw activism as a way to gain power and achieve their own political goals. No wonder contemporaries called activism a "marriage of convenience." Relations between the Czechs, Germans and Hungarians were greatly complicated by the change in their political position in the new state. The former dominant nations have now acquired only the status of a national minority. In addition, Czech politicians did not always seek to establish a truly sincere relationship with the Sudeten Germans and Hungarians, remembering the centuries of oppression and discrimination.

Another important factor influencing the adoption of a particular political line on the national question was the influence of neighboring states. Hitler's Germany, Hungary, Poland, and the Soviet Union used political parties to achieve their own goals. Significant radicalization of the national question in the programs of political parties was observed during periods of deteriorating economic situation, especially the economic crisis of 1930-1933.

All these factors together contributed to the aggravation of the political crisis in the First Czechoslovak Socialist Republic in the late 1930s, which was largely due to unresolved national issues.

Thus, the political parties of each of the national minorities had their own definition of the national question. The peculiarity of the political programs of the Czech parties was that, in comparison with the programs of the national minority parties, they paid much less attention to the national question. In some political programs of the Czech parties there were no provisions on the national question at all. A striking example is the rather influential Czechoslovak Crafts and Entrepreneurship Party. The lack of interest among the political elite of the Czech parties in the national question is explained by the deep conviction that the national question in the democratic system of the First Czechoslovak Socialist Republic would be solved by creating a Czechoslovak nation. Such an underestimation of the importance of the national question by the Czech political elite ultimately had devastating consequences for the Czechoslovak state.

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